

Rick Soerhen
Calfed Bay Delta Program
1416 Ninth St, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Subject: Conservation Program Proposals

Dear Rick:

It is hard to argue with most of the proposals in the conservation program. Especially so since they were mostly first proposed during the recent drought and often implemented to the point of being moot now. The conservation or tiered pricing will probably complete the process. The only conflict that ought to be more defined is the use of gray water and the pushing of low water use laundry equipment. This appears to be at cross purposes, and to avoid confusion by the public, or press, should be expanded and simplified in explanation. The PR aspects will be crucial to success.

The estimated savings and payback comparisons should be stressed. Also collateral savings ought to be stressed.

Changing turf types from those having an annual water use of 36" to those using 6" will have not only a savings in water, but also maintenance costs which ought to be factored in. Also turf which grows less from seed and more from stolons, and horticulture plantings which also contribute less to allergies and smog, should be publicized. Technical aid from the University to sod growers should be given to adapt these deep rooted turfs to marketable products.

Fire wise plant selection will also have water use benefits. Along with construction standards upgrades they should be given the encouragement of lower insurance rates. The use of hydrant proximity as a major rate determinant has been shown to be passe' when the hydrants are seen placed before a blackened vacant lot. Roof specs should be upgraded to at least class B from class C, and retardant impregnation of wood siding mandated for all new construction and repair.

The costs of water savings in fighting conflagrations is but one aspect; one must also consider the watershed loss in urban areas just as one would in interface and headwater areas. This is usually handled on the local level by ordinance or specification. Being opposed by the building industry, a major contributor to local politics, on the spurious grounds of housing affordability to the public, rather than the builder, there may be reluctance to enact these insurance and water cost saving measures. It is, therefore, time to consider whether the State wishes to continue to subsidize practices contrary to public policy through blanket Cal-vet loans or whether requirements concerning water conservation, added to current ones of habitability, will be placed on their issuance.

It is also incongruous for the State to distribute gas taxes for high water usage medians, rights of way, etc. construction and continued use by developers and agencies, while Caltrans goes to low water usage. However, agencies are not required by economics to practice conservation; they can soak their taxpayers as much as they do the soil by forming special districts.

Schools should have state funding withheld until their vast turfs are changed. As the payback in O&M is greater for them, little or no aid is necessary

Since increase in ag water use in the San Joaquin is caused by sprawl forcing ag to saline soil areas, which need water to just flush them it would be fair to those counties attempting to get a handle on urban sprawl to withhold in lieu fees from the saline retired lands from those which

which do not meet such specific criteria as mandated meters, infill ordinances, urban limit lines, etc

The conservation element of Assurance option 4, which would increase tier prices to agencies not practicing conservation with the increased funds going to conservation projects seems wise. The fact that the criteria would be made by urban areas themselves, struck me as a fox and hen-house situation, but, if the increases imposed go to municipal projects, then the situation may change to one of rapid incentivization.

Consumer tiered prices should go to the conservation fund as the scope of the ERPP is so vast that funding solely by contractor can't cover it. Also funding should decrease due to conservation concurrent with decreased need as priority projects are completed; this would decrease both actual and appearance of project boondoggling.

If this commentary be seen to have a theme, it is that Calfed must focus on paradigms as well as projects. Too long have parts of this state been seen as overly moist colonies populated by yokel hydrocephalics who would benefit by water transfers. Conversely, other areas are continued to be considered as a moisture mafia bent on supplying a population of water junkies. The problem is seen to be caused by other areas or agencies. It is true that these entities often are short sighted and greedy, but the water problem is statewide and will not be solved by demagogic paranoia. Lest you think that I also see the water problem as an external problem, I am enclosing a local example, which defines water table depletion as a potential development promotion and shows how pervasive is the practice of taking water for granted. Unlike gas shortages, where, after some conservation, there is a return to preshortage habits, there must be ongoing efforts to not allow complacency to defeat all the time and treasure put into the Calfed process.

Sincerely,

Dennis Fox
918 Blossom
Bakersfield, Ca
93306

(805) 366 4093